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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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COUNTRY: USSR
SUBJECT: US Tourist Arrested in Minsk/Volter Surveillance During Stay of Five Days/Partial Work to Relatives/Arrested in Hotel Spokoinyia/Minsk Worker in Hotel Official of Soviet Police/Large Number of Soldiers in Minsk
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NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT
DATE 2007
THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION
SOURCE: US citizen, traveling in the USSR as a tourist.

Source, who speaks Russian, traveled to the USSR to see relatives and to collect pictures and material for lectures. He is not a professional lecturer but does it more as a hobby. He is a second-generation Soviet with relatives living in the area of Novogrudok.

1. During a recent trip to the USSR (July 1-17, 1999), I spent five days in Minsk. My purpose for being in Minsk was to attempt to contact relatives living in the vicinity of Novogrudok. I had been assured by a man named [redacted] at [redacted] headquarters in Moscow that this could be arranged and by the time that I had reached Minsk that it would all have been taken care of. But as I had learned to understand, the [redacted] in Minsk had never heard of me or [redacted] and nothing had been arranged. In fact, I was informed that it would be impossible for me to travel to Novogrudok. I was given a series of excuses about road conditions and lack of suitable transportation. These excuses, coupled with "come back tomorrow" type of promises, managed to consume the five days I was scheduled for Minsk. I made several attempts to reach my relatives by telegraph. One such telegraph cost me a ruble a word, but I heard nothing from them and I seriously doubt that it was delivered. I've heard nothing from my relatives since returning to the US.
2. My wife and I spent our time in Minsk wandering about the city taking pictures of buildings and people and visiting points of interest, of which there are few. We made several attempts to visit the [redacted] in the area but each time I was told that it was a holiday or that it would be impossible for one reason or another.
3. On our second day in Minsk (either 12 or 13 July 1999) my wife and I were in the vicinity of the railroad station. We were interested in getting a picture of some landmark that might have been there for many years so that I could bring the picture back to my uncle who currently lives in the area. We spotted such a building. Completely in the open and not attempting to be secretive about it, my wife snapped a picture of the building. Almost immediately a man we had not particularly noticed before began peering at the top of his lungs that we were again taking pictures of the railroad yards. We were, of course, arrested and brought to the police headquarters. The officer before whom we were released after being kept waiting for almost two hours, demanded the film. I put up an argument which was to no avail. I gave up the film. Before the Soviet police official knew I could speak Russian he said to one of his assistants that all these American tourists are again sent over to take pictures. My offer to assist the camera, which seemed to please the Soviets, was at first turned down. However, later on I was taken by the police to

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- a camera shop where the film was developed. The film, as I had understood, was finished and, although they kept the film, I was allowed to return to my hotel (The Spetsennale).
4. After that incident, my wife and I were under continuous surveillance during the rest of our stay in Minsk.
5. In the hotel dining room where we ate most of our meals, my wife and I became acquainted with a Soviet couple who were eating at the same table with us. They, in turn, introduced us to the orchestra leader, who also was very anxious to talk with us. During the course of our conversation the orchestra leader asked, among other things, if I would be able to take a letter out of the USSR with us to mail to a relative in the West. I told him that I would. He said that he would see me again before I left Minsk.
6. The couple that we had met asked us if we would like to visit their apartment and have dinner with them the next night. We agreed and met a meeting place.
7. We noticed that everywhere we went the next day we were followed. The couple to whose house we had been invited for dinner met us at our hotel. As we were about to get into a taxi to leave for their apartment, I noticed that the man who had been following us that of the day climbed into another car and stopped a short distance behind us as we drove along. The Soviet couple mentioned the fact that we were being followed. We stopped for cigarettes to see what the "tail" would do. He stopped behind the Soviet couple thought it better that we not go to their apartment for obvious reasons, and we returned to the hotel. At this dining room at the hotel, the orchestra leader again came up to the table. Almost in a whisper he said that something must be up for the place was full of Secret Police. He left almost at once and did not stay to talk. He did say, however, that he had thought over about the letter and that he would not be sending it out with me.
8. During the course of the evening I had a very friendly chat with the bandleader in the Hotel Spetsennale dining room. He was very generous, offered all kinds of help and was very solicitous about what had happened to us when I told him of being arrested. When I returned to my table one of our Soviet friends asked us what we had talked about and then told us that the bandleader was the head of the local Secret Police and that he was at the hotel only during the summer tourist season.
9. The third day of my stay in Minsk, the Soviets really took care of us. My wife and I had again invited our friends to the hotel for dinner. We were sitting at our table enjoying champagne. Both couples of us left the table to dance. Upon our return to the table my wife suddenly became violently ill and rushed from the table to our room. As she was leaving I too became ill with sharp pains in my chest. I rushed to the man's room, where I vomited. I noticed that on this occasion, as on subsequent trips to the man's room when I was attended by sums of money, I was followed. I later (I believe it was in Moscow) related this story to an official of the Canadian Embassy to whom I was introduced. He told us that this was a favorite trick of the Soviets when Canadians became too friendly or had prolonged conversations with Soviet civilians.
10. Again, on the fourth day, we were followed by a man in a car when we went to a recreation area known as the Rinka Spa for a swim. This time the "tail" pushed his car as we had done and came to the water's edge near where we were swimming. He made motions as if to hint the temperature of the water with his hand. He completely ignored us, but as far as I know we were never out of his sight.

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11. I was never allowed to contact my relatives, which was the purpose of my visit, nor was I allowed to go anywhere or see anything that was of more than casual tourist interest. I did, however, notice the large number of military personnel that was in the city of Minsk. They were everywhere I went; I could not estimate how many I saw, but I do recall being impressed with the number. One man with whom I struck up a conversation said he was a Soviet Army officer and that he was stationed in the Novogrudsk area.

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